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AUTHOR	Gayle, Dennis John; Tewarie, Bhoendradatt; White, A. Quinton, Jr.
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ABSTRACT

University governance refers to the structure and process of authoritative decision making across issues that are significant for external and internal stakeholders within a university. A number of fundamental challenges to effective governance occur within the typical university environment, including too many constituencies, conflicting agendas, differing philosophies, traditions, and differences in perspectives among stakeholder. There are some core governance-related issues for the 21st century, especially: (1) technology and distance learning; (2) teaching and learning; and (3) resource allocation. A new model for governance may be in order for the university of the future, a model that places the attitudes, values, and expectations of internal and external stakeholders at the center. In this model, inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes are all mediated by stakeholders' attitudes, values, and expectations. The university of the future is already evolving, and the necessary governance structures are beginning to evolve as well. (Contains 12 references.) (SLD)

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Governance in the Twenty-First-Century University: Approaches to Effective Leadership and Strategic Management

By Dennis John Gayle, Bhoendradatt Tewarie, and A. Quinton White, Jr.

Introduction

University governance refers to the structure and process of authoritative decision making across issues that are significant for external as well as internal stakeholders within a university. The structure of university governance may be visualized in different ways—as a series of concentric circles, for example, or as a set of overlapping circles. In any case, an extensive group of stakeholders seeks to influence university rules and policies in the United States. These stakeholders include higher education associations, funding organizations, the U.S. Department of Education, related congressional committees, accrediting institutions, system-level offices, governors, state departments or boards of education, state legislators, students, alumni, local community members, trustees, senior administrators, faculty leaders and presidents. In other countries, the variety of stakeholders involved, the power and influence that they wield, and their significance and value to the university as an institution parallel that in the U.S. (Arimoto, 2001).

Facing the Fundamental Challenges

A number of fundamental challenges to effective governance occur within the typical university environment:

" Too many constituencies take a seat at the academic table and claim a piece of the pie (Amaral, Jones, & Karseth, 2002). Sometimes, agendas conflict. Who is the client? Who ultimately decides? Are the most important loyalties attached to the discipline or to the institution?

" Philosophical views on the extent of inclusiveness and the optimal depth of consultation vary widely. Some consider inclusive consultation as necessary to advance discipline-based knowledge and student learning. Others see it as dangerous, because it leads to governance through multiple vetoes by campus groups with vested interests.

" The industry is rich with traditions and idiosyncrasies, as illustrated by the concept of tenure. In environments where tenured professors can exercise power but are not subject to any sanctions, there is often no sense of urgency to address pressing problems. Moreover, such freedom and autonomy without attendant costs should errors of judgment occur can serve to encourage academic leaders to execute top-down decisions.

" Multivariate differences in perspectives between faculty and administrators, faculty and trustees, and administrators and trustees can emerge, with levels of explicitness that might vary with time and the policy issue being addressed.

Core Governance-related Issues for the Twenty-first Century

Technology and distance learning

The evolving effects of educational technology on stakeholders' perceptions are just beginning to be seen. Though connecting the campus to the Internet is daunting and expensive, technology will certainly continue to expand as an integral component of classroom instruction (Van Dusen, 1997). Increasing numbers of universities and colleges are participating in distance education or Web-based learning. New technology has brought with it a new set of challenges. Who controls course content? Who sets the standards for faculty qualifications? How should these programs be accredited? And finally, critically important to any institution wishing to use Web-based learning programs, what is needed in an intellectual property policy to establish clear patent, copyright, and software policy statements?

Teaching and Learning

For colleges and universities, no issue is more central than the relationship between governance and the internal environment for teaching and learning. The extent to which campus stakeholders perceive institutional governance to be shared can enhance or constrain the role of a college or university as a vehicle for teaching and learning (El-Khawas, 2002). In enhancing learning and individual student development, the key is not simply for faculty to teach more and better, but to create conditions that motivate and inspire students to educationally purposive activities, both inside and outside the classroom. Faculty who encourage deep and relational learning must have the institutional support to do so. The essential variable in effective teaching and learning may be whether universities and colleges are viewed from the top as academic corporations or as institutions intended to foster innovative teaching and learning (McMillin, & Berberet, 2002).

Resource Allocation

Every university and college governance system must address the recurrent questions of who receives what, when, why, and how, in an effective and equitable manner. Nowhere does the perception of shared governance have more potential for conflict than in the area of budget and finances. Many universities have found that integration of strategic planning and budgeting is well served by the introduction of a modified responsibility management system. Such an approach may significantly contribute to continuous quality improvement in university communities and also allow for the formulation of proactive stances, especially with regard to public education performance-funding initiatives. All but a handful of U.S. states appear likely to implement performance-based funding in the near future (Burke and Associates, 2002). In fact, responsibility-centered management (RCM) may be viewed as the single most effective method available for linking unit budgets and academic priorities. It has three underlying principles: 1) All costs and income attributable to each academic or administrative profit center should be assigned to that unit; 2) Appropriate incentives should exist for each unit to increase income and

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reduce costs continuously, so as to further agreed university-wide strategy; and 3) All the costs of support units or cost centers, such a libraries or student counseling, should be allocated to particular profit centers (Whalen, 1991). RCM is intended to provide incentives for colleges, schools, and departments to undertake excellent teaching, research, and service, thus increasing potential income generated while providing information that can lead to significant new efficiencies in university structure and processes (Massy, 1996).

A New Model for Governance

Perhaps a new governance model is in order for the university of the future--one that places the attitudes, values, and expectations of internal and external stakeholders at the center. Emerging evidence of needed change must be interpreted and acted upon by faculty, administrators, students, trustees, and presidents in an open system (Gumport, 2000). Some responses may be positive, expressed in terms of rules, policies, and budgets that contribute to systemic survival and vitality; others may exemplify negative entropy.

In this model, other inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes are actually all mediated by stakeholders' attitudes, values, and expectations. Structures such as departments, institutes, and centers; policies of federal and state governments; legislative decisions; the goals of relevant foundations; and the criteria applied by regional accrediting associations remain important. But they are not necessarily determining factors. Presidents, senior administrators, faculty, trustees, students, and alumni should function as leaders sharing a mostly consensual understanding of the policy environment and working together to implement goals (Kezar, 2001; Yammarino, & Dansereau, 2001).

The University of the Future

The university of the twenty-first century is already evolving. Such universities are both local, rooted in their regional communities, and global in the scope of their networks of intellectual contact. The twenty-first-century university is much more an intellectual space, underpinned by instructional technologies, values, ideas, revenue flows, and sociopolitical legitimacy than a physical space with a specific set of buildings. In any case, institutional and individual branding in which desirable deliverables are promoted, generated, evaluated, and enhanced over time will remain essential. Some universities will identify competitive niches and continually reinvent themselves to meet the changing needs of their constituents (Kezar, 2001). Many others will find themselves considering choices that include repeated budgetary crises and cuts, and efforts at transformation that follow rather than anticipate environmental change, merger, and closure. What is required is university governance that, in structure and process, encourages and facilitates positive, proactive, and continuous institutional transformation together with relationship-building strategies focused on stakeholders as well as markets and sustained revenue generation.

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